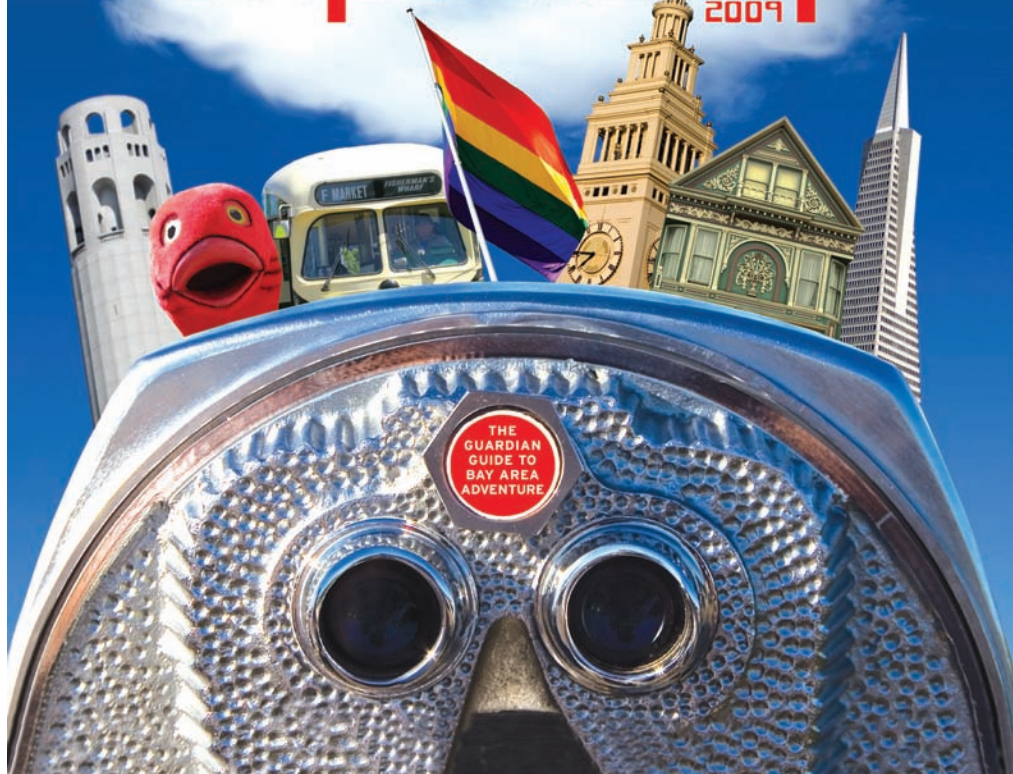


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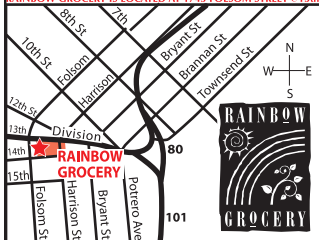
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## EXPLORE THE CITY

I don't know about you, but whenever my cool friends or wonderful but eager family visit San Francisco and ask me what there is to see and do, I get total tourist block. No matter how well I think I know the Bay, my brain shuts down and my tongue gets stuttery. And I usually don't have time to search through their fancy 300-page visitors' guides and highlight all the neat things bright pink. So we here at the *Guardian* decided to create Explore SF, for visitors and natives alike. Just tell your guests to slip this in their pockets and set them free to discover some real local flavor. Or grab it on the weekends when you're bored and hit the streets yourself. Inside, we've chosen places we like, as well as some neighborhood hotspots for you to while away a pleasant afternoon or evening. For many more suggestions than we could fit here, visit us at [sfbg.com](http://sfbg.com) for our Best of the Bay awards, event listings, dining options, and more.

**Marke B.**

*Explore SF editor*





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## get festive



San Francisco loves a party, which is why we try to pack as many into 49 square miles and 365 days as we possibly can. Favorites are **How Weird Street Faire** (early May, [www.howweird.org](http://www.howweird.org)), a fête for freaks of all types; **Bay to Breakers** (third Sunday in May, [www.ingbaytobreakers.com](http://www.ingbaytobreakers.com)), which is half race and half costumed spectacle; **Pride** (late June, [www.sfpride.org](http://www.sfpride.org)), the citywide rainbow-colored celebration of all things LGBT; **Folsom Street Fair** (late September, [www.folsomstreetfair.com](http://www.folsomstreetfair.com)), the neighborhood celebration of all things leather; and **LoveFest** (October, [www.sflowest.org](http://www.sflowest.org)), the American cousin of Berlin's famous electronic event. Also check out less institutionalized but equally beloved (and even more irreverent) events like the **Valentine's Day Pillow Fight** ([www.pillowfight.info](http://www.pillowfight.info)), the **Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence's Easter Sunday in Dolores Park** ([thesisters.org](http://thesisters.org)), and **Santacon** ([www.santacon.com](http://www.santacon.com)).

## THINGS WE LIKE

## Ritual Coffee Roasters

With its antiestablishment logo, interesting art, tattooed baristas devoted to coffee culture, and scenester customers devoted to their laptops, Ritual embodies several generations of quintessential San Franciscan culture — from the Summer of Love to the dot com boom (2.0) — with a decidedly funky Mission District flair.

1026 Valencia, SF. (415) 641-1024, [www.ritualroasters.com](http://www.ritualroasters.com)  
 Neighborhood: Mission. Muni: 14 Mission, 26 Valencia. BART: 24th Street

## Zeitgeist

Rain or shine, this world-famous dive always seems packed with hipsters, hippies, bikers, anarchists, burners, European exchange students, and anyone else willing to brave notoriously surly service from punk-rock bartenders. The payoff? A chance to sip stellar Bloody Marys or draught imports on a beer garden-style bench in the expansive backyard.

199 Valencia, SF. (415) 255-7505, [myspace.com/zeitgeistsf](http://myspace.com/zeitgeistsf)  
 Neighborhood: SoMa. Muni: 22 Fillmore, 26 Valencia

## AsiaSF

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201 Ninth St., SF. (415) 255-2742, [www.asiasf.com](http://www.asiasf.com)  
 Neighborhood: SoMa. Muni: F Line, 14 Mission, 19 Polk.  
 BART: Civic Center Station

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## switching gears



This is a bike town, baby, and your best bet for taking in the sights, sounds, and occasionally iffy smells of this fair burg is to two-wheel it. Bike rental shops can be found anywhere in the city — especially good are **Blazing Saddles** (multiple locations, 415-202-8888, [www.blazingsaddles.com](http://www.blazingsaddles.com)) and **Golden Gate Park Bike and Skate** (3038 Fulton, 415-668-1117). The thrilling **Critical Mass** ([www.critical-mass.org](http://www.critical-mass.org)), a massive, somewhat chaotic ride and party that takes over the streets every last Friday evening of the month, brings bikers of all stripes together. As for San Francisco bike culture, be sure to grab a pint and sausage at **Gestalt Haus** (3159 16th St., 415-560-0137) — the city's first bar dedicated to bicyclists — or a coffee and sandwich at the gearhead-oriented **Mojo** (639 Divisadero, 415-440-2338, [www.mojobicyclecafe.com](http://www.mojobicyclecafe.com)). For more bike events and info, check out the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition's Web site ([www.sfbike.org](http://www.sfbike.org)).

## Bottom of the Hill

Situated deep in the deceptively charming industrial district of Potrero Hill, this music venue, bar, and restaurant is known to music fans worldwide as one of the best places in San Francisco to see live bands. With a roster of performers that reads like Pitchfork's *Who's Who of Indie Rock* (and local acts soon to be included), an intimate stage, cheap cover, and a comfortable smoking patio, it's a good bet seven days a week.

1233 17th St., SF. (415) 621-4455, [www.bottomofthehill.com](http://www.bottomofthehill.com)  
 Neighborhood: Potrero Hill. Muni: 19 Polk, 22 Fillmore

## Japantown

Japanese immigrants flocked to the area in Western Addition between Van Ness Avenue and Fillmore Street 100 years ago, and Japanophiles have been following their lead ever since. You can't miss Japan Center, a three-block mall featuring shops that sell rare Japanese products, a multiplex theater, and a memorial designed by a world-renowned architect.

Between Geary, Polk, Laguna, and Fillmore, SF. [www.sfjapantown.org](http://www.sfjapantown.org)  
 Neighborhood: Fillmore. Muni: 38 Geary

## Beat Museum

If there's one thing North Beach is known for more than its Italian roots, it's for being the adopted home of the Beat generation. This shop and museum is dedicated to all things Kerouac-and-friends, from documentaries upstairs to Beat bobbleheads (downstairs). An interesting education for curious on-the-readers and a treasure trove for serious, finger-snapping fanatics looking to get groovy.

540 Broadway, SF. (800) 537-6822, [www.thebeatmuseum.org](http://www.thebeatmuseum.org)  
 Neighborhood: North Beach. Muni: 20 Columbus, 41 Union, 45 Union/Stockton



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## hey, kids



Though SF's known for being an adult playground, there's plenty here to entertain those too young to enjoy Trannyshack. There's something for everyone — and for free — at toddler-friendly **Randall Museum** (199 Museum Way, 415-554-9600, [www.randallmuseum.org](http://www.randallmuseum.org)), which houses an animal room, a labyrinth, and tons of exhibits on a hill near Twin Peaks. When you're done inside, you and the young'uns can hike through the neighboring canyon. Let older kids loose at the **Metreon** (101 Fourth St.; 415-369-6000, [www.metreon.com](http://www.metreon.com)) whose cinema, Playstation store, arcade, and neighboring Yerba Buena Gardens will occupy them for hours while you tour SoMa's shops and restaurants in teen-free peace. Or take the whole family to quirky Golden Gate Park attraction the **Buffalo Paddock** (John F. Kennedy Dr., 415-831-2700), where (you guessed it) a herd of buffalo actually graze, play, and — yes — roam, harkening back to the days when the park was a free-range zoo.

## Yoshi's Fillmore

The Fillmore District was an epicenter of the golden age of West Coast jazz, and this huge, luxurious, recent addition to the area is reviving the spirit of that bygone era for thousands of delighted musicophiles and newbies. Dine on delicious sushi, grab a couple of cool cocktails, and sink into the tuneful, improvisatory vibes with live shows nightly.

1330 Fillmore. (415) 655-5600, [www.yoshis.com](http://www.yoshis.com)  
 Neighborhood: Fillmore. Muni: 22 Fillmore, 38 Geary

## Zante Pizza and Indian Cuisine

It's one thing to claim to invent a curious dish like "Indian pizza" — but quite another to have it turn out quite so amazingly. Zante in the Outer Mission has been serving this unique, crispy-crust-ed delicacy for years; it's a San Francisco classic. Choose your toppings from an expansive, unusual list that includes spinach, tandoori chicken, cauliflower, eggplant, and more. The restaurant also features savory traditional Indian foods (the veggie samosas will knock your socks off). If you can't make it in, Zante delivers to most of the city seven days a week.

3489 Mission. (415) 821-3949, [www.zantespizza.com](http://www.zantespizza.com)  
 Neighborhood: Outer Mission. Muni: 14 Mission

## Fiona's Sweet Shoppe

Ah yes, the famous Union Square, where the tumult of international commercialism, in the form of a gazillion department stores and tourist traps, can certainly overwhelm. When you've had enough browsing, or just need a sweet refresher, head a few blocks northeast to this incredibly cute, tiny candy store on Sutter Street. Scrumptious old school confections like English toffee and Dutch licorice abound, each piece individually wrapped and displayed in adorable jars.

214 Sutter. (415) 399-9992, [www.fionassweetshoppe.com](http://www.fionassweetshoppe.com)  
 Neighborhood: Downtown. Muni: 30 Stockton, 45 Union

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## drag time



Where would San Francisco be without its drag queens? Probably floating somewhere in the bland ocean of gender-specific tedium. To take in some jaw-dropping old-school drag, hit up the athletic weekend performances of the grande dames of Hot Boxxx at Tenderloin watering hole **Aunt Charlie's Lounge** (133 Turk, 415-441-2922, [www.auntcharlieslounge.com](http://www.auntcharlieslounge.com)) and the cheeky lip-synchstravaganzas at **Marlena's** (488 Hayes, 415-864-6672, [www.marlenasbarsf.com](http://www.marlenasbarsf.com)), which is even owned by a former drag empress. For trashy new-school drag madness (get ready for fake blood), you can't beat Anna Conda's free Friday night weekly **Charlie Horse at the Cinch** (1723 Polk, 415-776-4162, [www.thecinch.com](http://www.thecinch.com)), the wild night-time antics at the very Castro **Lookout** (3600 12th St., 415-431-0306, [www.lookoutsf.com](http://www.lookoutsf.com)) near the Castro, or any of the mind-blowing events brought to you by drag mafia don-diva Heklina ([www.heklina.com](http://www.heklina.com)).

## Harry Denton's Starlight Room

An oldie but still very-goodie. This dazzling bar and nightclub on the 21st floor of the Sir Francis Drake Hotel has an atmosphere that occasionally rises into glitzy high camp, but with 360-degree views of the glimmering city at night through floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows — well, all aboard the disco-go-round! Among all the polished Art Nouveau decor, the 1930s-style ladies room is a definite must-see. Sundays play host to the raucous “Sunday's a Drag” brunch and gender-illusionist showcase — a stunning buffet if ever there was one.

450 Powell. (415) 395-8595, [www.harrydenton.com](http://www.harrydenton.com)  
 Neighborhood: Downtown. Muni: 38 Geary, 30 Stockton

## Upper Playground

An art gallery, a fashion label, a men's and women's boutique — Upper Playground, whose various outlets take up approximately an entire block of Fillmore Street in Lower Haight, is the streetwise hipster's one-stop dream. Local graffiti artists line up to design for Upper Playground's numerous lines of T-shirts, hats, jackets, and accessories (including cheeky dildos and shot glasses), or to display their latest graphic works. When you're done fingering monogrammed fleece in downtown's tourist traps, this is the place to collect real SF souvenirs.

220 Fillmore. (415) 861-1960, [www.upperplayground.com](http://www.upperplayground.com)  
 Neighborhood: Lower Haight. Muni: 30

## The Buena Vista

Whether or not the talented gents of the Buena Vista bar and café brought the everdreamy Irish coffee to America (as has been claimed), this well-appointed bar is well worth visiting for its cozy, old-timey atmosphere in the heart of North Beach — and for that lovely, steaming concoction of Irish whisky and specially prepared cream.

2765 Hyde. (415) 474-5044. [www.thebuenavista.com](http://www.thebuenavista.com)  
 Neighborhood: North Beach. Cable Car: Powell and Hyde





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## hotspot: mission

# 16TH & VALENCIA

Known for its quirky blend of Latin-American culture, highbrow gentrification, low-brow hipster-ification, art, shopping, and nightlife, the Mission District is one of the city's most diverse — and most popular — neighborhoods. And the intersection of 16th and Valencia streets could be called the heart of the new Mission. With a number of dives, lounges, taquerias, upscale restaurants, boutiques, and thrift stores within stumbling distance of the BART Station and the 22 Fillmore bus stop, it's no wonder this is the place Marina barhoppers, bridge-and-tunnel tourists, fixie-riding residents, and panhandling street dwellers come to meet, greet, and eat.

**Muni: 22 Fillmore**

**26 Valencia**

**49 Mission-Van Ness**

**53 Southern Heights**

**BART: 16th Street and Mission**

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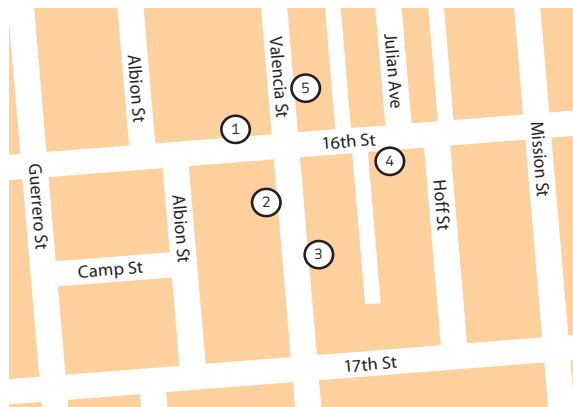
## sidetrips

### HAYES VALLEY

Hayes Valley, the Mission District's younger, more sophisticated sister, is known for blending San Francisco's funky style with an upscale sensibility. Given its haute couture for shoppers, chic culinary fare for Civic Center culturati, and unusual furnishings for homeowners, it's no surprise that this rapidly gentrified neighborhood draws all types. **Blue Bottle Coffee Co.** (315 Linden, 415-252-7535, [www.bluebottlecoffee.net](http://www.bluebottlecoffee.net)) is an Oakland-based company whose addictive brew is served out of a cute little garage-like kiosk — kind of like a lemonade stand for grown-ups. Get a healthy dose of fashion and DIY spirit at **RAG Residents Apparel Gallery** (541 Octavia, 415-621-7718, [www.ragsf.com](http://www.ragsf.com)): you'll never see anyone in your hometown wearing the same watch-cog cufflinks or hand-knit fingerless gloves you bought here. A delicious French-flavored sandwich or salad and glass of fine wine at **Arlequin** (384 Hayes, 415-626-1211, [www.arlequinwinermerchant.com](http://www.arlequinwinermerchant.com)) will power you up for a stroll through the sunny new **Hayes Green** park before more shopping.

**Muni: 21 Hayes**

## 16TH & VALENCIA



### 1. Ti Couz

There are plenty of other places to get crepes in the city, but few are as charming or stylish as this Mission favorite. Both the sweet and savory versions feature fresh ingredients folded into paper-thin pockets, served up by sophisticated staff. But it's really the European atmosphere, both at the bar and in the cozy dining area, that makes this a delightful destination for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or even just a cocktail break.

3108 16th St. (415) 252-7373

### 2. Five and Diamond

If you need proof that San Francisco is at the cutting edge of indie fashion, look no further than this funky boutique. The shop, owned by founding members of the Yard Dogs Road Show, is

as much a love letter to circus-inspired culture as it is a supply house for it. Whether or not you're in the market for striped pantaloon, leather holster bags, and jewelry made from typewriter keys, you'll enjoy the visual feast that this retail boudoir provides — and marvel at a city that can support such a particular niche.

510 Valencia. (415) 255-9747, [www.fiveanddiamond.com](http://www.fiveanddiamond.com)

### 3. Therapy

Thanks to its diverse selection of clothing, accessories, cards, knick-knacks, furniture, and novelty items — as well as its generous holiday hours — Therapy has long been a favorite one-stop shop for last minute Christmas gifts. But perusing its offerings is gratifying any time of year.

545 Valencia. (415) 865-0981, [www.shopattherapy.com](http://www.shopattherapy.com)

### 4. Pancho Villa

Don't let the cafeteria ambiance fool you. The food at this large, bright, award-winning taqueria is authentic, delicious, and served up in more-than-ample portions — and the line always moves faster than you expect. Locals love the salsa bar and the fact that this beacon of burrito-dom is open until midnight.

3071 16th St. (415) 864-8840, [www.panchovillasf.com](http://www.panchovillasf.com)

### 5. Clothes Contact

When it comes to a carefully edited selection of vintage duds and retro finds, you can't ask for more than Idol. But we're highlighting runner-up Clothes Contact for its broader appeal. This delightful thrift/consignment shop has a wide selection of costumes and everyday wear, including buy-by-the-pound bins, new items (like fishnets and crinoline skirts), and shoes — all at lower prices than most vintage shops but with better selections than your average thrift store.

473 Valencia. (415) 621-3212

## sidetrips

### SOMA

Ah, South of Market. Once it was a gritty industrial district crawling with cruise-y gay leathermen, then a slicked-out gentrification ground zero full of odd dot-com boom architecture, it's now a rather charming mix of the two, with a population that's seen it all and doesn't want to bother telling you about it. There are several gourmet restaurant gems here and warehouse factory outlets, and at night the neighborhood becomes a clubber's paradise, with bars and clubs dotting almost every block from Market to Harrison between Eighth and 11th streets. If you're out for some evening revelry, check out massive techno and trance club **1015 Folsom** (1015 Folsom, 415-431-7444, [www.1015.com](http://www.1015.com)) — but be sure to read the crowd in line first to see if it fits your taste. Scruffy gay leather bikers — and friends — flock to the large patio at the **Eagle Tavern** (398 12th St., 415-626-0880, [www.sfeagle.com](http://www.sfeagle.com)), especially on Sunday afternoons. For eats, go southeast near Fifth Street to sample the authentic and fantastic Peruvian dishes of the intimate **Mochica Restaurant** (937 Harrison, 415-278-0480, [www.mochicasf.com](http://www.mochicasf.com)). Mmm, SoMa ceviche ...

**Muni: F Market, 12 Folsom**



## hotspot: castro

# 18<sup>TH</sup> & CASTRO

Hurray for gays, and yay for this center of LGBT culture which - despite its more touristy aspects (if you want an anatomically correct Ken doll or sequined rainbow thong, this is the place) - still retains a strong sense of community and history. Plus cute boys. And hot dykes. The relaxed, picturesque neighborhood, located just north of the Mission, has one or two stops along the cruising way to refresh yourself and score a few non-rainbow-bedecked goodies. If you're of the queer persuasion, don't forget to orient yourself at the dazzling Charles M. Holmes LGBT Community Center (1800 Market, 415-865-5555, [www.sfcenter.org](http://www.sfcenter.org)).

**Muni: F line**  
**24 Divisadero**

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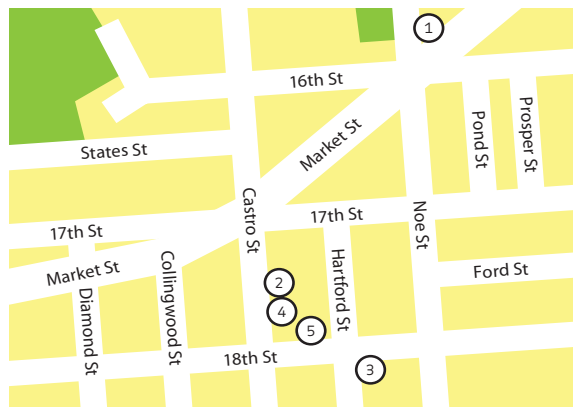
## sidetrips

### NOE VALLEY

When San Francisco hipsters grow up, most move west of the Mission to Noe Valley, where they share their beautifully bourgeois, geographically isolated paradise with dot-com homeowners and other stroller-pushers. As a result, many businesses here appeal to those stroller-pushers, like the adorable gift, stationery, and kid's bookstore **Ladybug Ladybug** (3870 24th St., 415-824-5477, [ladybugladybug.com](http://ladybugladybug.com)). Others cater to folks who look upon their more adventurous days fondly, mixing SF's classic funky style with a touch of class and refinement. A perfect example is **Firefly** (4288 24th St., 415-821-7652, [www.fireflyrestaurant.com](http://www.fireflyrestaurant.com)), serving world-class cuisine in a rustic-chic, casual setting. And for those who bought Victorians with tech boom money, there are mini-hotspots like **Bliss** (4026 24th St., 415-826-6200, [www.bliss-barsf.com](http://www.bliss-barsf.com)), a crimson-lit lounge with chichi cocktails and a back room separated from the front by a chain-link fence.

**Muni: J Church**

## 18TH & CASTRO



### 1. Café Flore

Flore is the ultimate gay café, its spacious, forest-like patio and polished-wood interior are never lacking in full-bar drink specials, perfectly portioned brunch dishes, steaming lattes, and even steamier glances. Don't fret, though - this is a great place to chill without feeling pressure to pick up anything heavier than a good book. On certain nights there are wacky tropical themes, on others the mel-low electronic and disco strains of well-known DJs can be savored. 2298 Market. (415) 621-8579, [www.cafeflore.com](http://www.cafeflore.com)

### 2. Cliff's Variety

This full-service hardware store in the heart of the Castro is a San Francisco classic and a queer must-see - even if you're not looking for fresh new set of drill bits. It's brimming with burly

he-men, hardy women, and all kinds of neato interior decor items, rare toys, and did we mention burly he-men? Pop in and get your bolts tightened by the knowledgeable staff.

479 Castro. (415) 431-5365, [www.cliffsvariety.com](http://www.cliffsvariety.com)

### 3. Moby Dick

Of course, there are many bars in the area - some too chi-chi, a few just rough enough to make them sexy - but Moby Dick is one of those places that feels just right for cruising, shmoozing, and boozing. Pinball, pool, and video games help distract when the music gets a bit too '90s retro, as do the generous pours at reasonable prices from the unfailingly friendly bartenders.

4049 18th St. [www.mobydicksf.com](http://www.mobydicksf.com)

### 4. A Different Light

As gay and proud as any bookstore could be, this legendary lambda nook may not go heavy on atmosphere, but its encyclopedic selections of LGBT literature, pectorally-adorned coffee-table books, and risqué magazines - indeed, a very full selection of risqué magazines - hearkens back to the days when "the Web" referred more to Kiss of the Spider Woman than a series of tubes that made porn really boring.

489 Castro. (415) 431-0891, [www.adlbooks.com](http://www.adlbooks.com)

### 5. Poesia

The last thing you think you may want after a long afternoon of sidewalk shopping in the Castro is a hearty plate of noodles (Freudian!), but this Italian delight is just the ticket for both romance and satisfaction. Here, exquisitely prepared does not mean miniscule, and although the menu is priced for special occasions, the festive ambiance, which includes Fellini flicks projected on the walls, and fine food is worth it.

4072 18th St. (415) 252-9325, [www.poesiasf.com](http://www.poesiasf.com)

## sidetrips

### LOWER HAIGHT

While the world has been focused on the Upper Haight's historic roots or Hayes Valley's promising and *überchic* future, the neighborhood between them has been left to define itself. Like an overlooked middle child free to develop a personality outside family expectations, the grittier Lower Haight is lower brow than younger sis Hayes, lower key than older sis Haight-Ashbury, and more diverse than hipster cousin Mission District. Do some only-in-San-Francisco shopping for indie fashions (some made while you watch) at **Trunk** (544 Haight, 415-861-5310, [www.trunksf.com](http://www.trunksf.com)). Then grab a beer at whimsically cave-like **Noc Noc** (557 Haight, 861-5811, [www.nocnocs.com](http://www.nocnocs.com)) or a stiffer tippie at **Molotov's** (582 Haight, 415-558-8019) across the street for prime punk-rock people-watching. Try **Rosamunde Sausage Grill** (545 Haight, 415-437-6851) for great carry-along brats or funky **Memphis Minnie's** (575 Haight, 415-864-7675) for sit-down barbecue, Lower Haight style.

**Muni: 7 Haight, 22 Fillmore**

**hotspot:**  
**RUSSIAN HILL**

# JACKSON & HYDE

Perhaps best known to members of the MTV generation as the place where Puck's roommates kicked him out of the house in *The Real World: San Francisco*, this charming neighborhood's name goes back to the Gold Rush era, when settlers discovered a small Russian cemetery at the top of the hill. Now the area is known as Nob Hill's more visitor-friendly, less formal neighbor, though both enclaves share dazzling views and plenty of opportunities for dining, drinking, and shopping — especially clustered around Hyde and Polk streets.

**Muni:** PH Powell-Hyde Cable Car  
**12 Folsom**  
**19 Polk**  
**27 Bryant**  
**30X Marina Express**  
**BART:** Powell

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## sidetrips

### NORTH BEACH/CHINATOWN

At the vast three-way intersection of Stockton-Green-Columbus, and you'll find delicious Italian pastry and gelato shops, mind-blowing Asian herbal remedy outlets, and remnants of Beat culture along its edges. It's also one of the few spots in San Francisco where you can still feel a palpable sense of history, from the old-school Victorian architecture supporting laundry lines, to the elaborate stone edifices of the churches and meeting halls, to the shirtless seniors greeting each other in unfathomable Sicilian dialects. The **North Beach Museum** (1435 Stockton, 415-391-6210) is a free gem featuring blown-up Great Quake photographs, preserved Asian immigrant clothing, and a wealth of engrossing artifacts of the neighborhood's flux and flow.

**A. Cavalli & Co.** (1441 Stockton, 415-421-4219) serves up one mean espresso with a unique shot of Italian-language comics. Enjoy the tastes of our favorite Italian dishes at **L'Osteria del Forno** (519 Columbus, 415-982-1124, [www.losteriadelforno.com](http://www.losteriadelforno.com)) and, if you're adventurous, take in a punk-rock strip show at the worker-owned **Lusty Lady** (1033 Kearny, 415-391-1326, [www.lustyladysf.com](http://www.lustyladysf.com)).

**Muni: 20 Columbus, 30 Stockton**

## JACKSON & HYDE



### 1. La Folie

Only a few short blocks away is this sophisticated French restaurant, known for its great service and even better food. And perhaps its greatest asset? It manages to be both a neighborhood bistro and a destination spot. Just don't expect to make it to a show after dinner — or to save a buck. This is the kind of place that takes time and money to enjoy.

2316 Polk. (415) 776-5577, [www.lafolie.com](http://www.lafolie.com)

### 2. 1550 Hyde

This cozy, intimate neighborhood favorite is the perfect place for an affordable date with a foodie. The Mediterranean-inspired cuisine tends toward the local and organic. The wine list is not only impressive but well-matched with the menu, and a window

seat gives a great view of the cable cars as they pass by.

1550 Hyde. (415) 775-1550, [1550hyde.com](http://1550hyde.com)

### 3. Limonaia

The tiny yellow shop is like the home your mom wished she had. Chock full of candles, soaps, bath salts, curious knick-knacks, and sweet home décor items, it's a favorite destination for window-shoppers and gift seekers who like their indulgences adorable and unique. Stop in to eye the delicate French chocolates, hand-embroidered pillows, necklaces by local artists, and coo-worthy baby onesies.

1506 Vallejo. (415) 440-9700, [www.shoplmonaia.com](http://www.shoplmonaia.com)

### 4. Spring

Proving that going green doesn't mean sacrificing style, this home and body shop features a range of items that are simultaneously gorgeous and guilt-free. Plus, they've got everything, big (organic mattresses, sustainably-made blankets) and small (toxin-free baby toys, all-natural cosmetics). The only thing better than the selection of chic dishware and earth-friendly paints is the space itself: bright, airy, and fresh as, well, Spring.

2162 Polk. (415) 673-2065, [www.springhome.com](http://www.springhome.com)

### 5. Eco-Citizen

Joslin Van Arsdale's mini-boutique does for your closet what Spring does for the rest of your house: meld high style with higher consciousness. Far from a hippie hemp dealer, Van Arsdale uses her impeccable taste to choose sustainable clothing and jewelry that would be fashionable even without the "green" label. Call it eco-couture — this fashionista's choices are well-made, chic, and timeless elegant.

1478 Vallejo. (415) 614-0100, [www.ecocitizenonline.com](http://www.ecocitizenonline.com)

## sidetrips

### DOWNTOWN

Like a classic city center, SF's downtown (south of North Beach and Chinatown) is dense with retail shops, office buildings, hotels, urban restaurants, and museums — all with an understandably more button-downed feel than the city's other neighborhoods. Catch a show or just ogle the architecture along the Geary Street theater district, paying particular attention to the historic **Geary Theater** (415 Geary, 415-749-2228, [www.act-sf.org](http://www.act-sf.org)). You'll find a plethora of worthy fine dining spots in this 'hood, but for a particularly spectacular, sophisticated meal, try hidden gem **Café Andrée** (562 Sutter, 415-217-4001, [www.jdvhotels.com](http://www.jdvhotels.com)), housed next to the literary-themed lounge inside Hotel Rex. Other downtown highlights are album-hunting at independent music store **Rasputin Music** (69 Powell, 800-350-8700, [www.rasputinmusic.com](http://www.rasputinmusic.com)) and people-watching at Union Square.

**Muni: 1 California, 30 Stockton, F line**

## hotspot: sunset 9TH AVE & IRVING

The Sunset District lies south along Golden Gate Park, and was so named to attract homebuyers to its foggy environs. But it's actually quite sunny on many days, and Irving and Judah streets between Fourth and 10th avenues offer a number of interesting shops, restaurants, and bakeries, as well as side-walks thrumming with casual strollers and young mothers pushing double-wide prams. It's not too upscale, and since it's pretty laidback and right off the park, perusing this area makes for a delightful sojourn.

**Muni: N Judah  
6 Parnassus**

GUARDIAN PHOTO  
BY PAT MAZZERA



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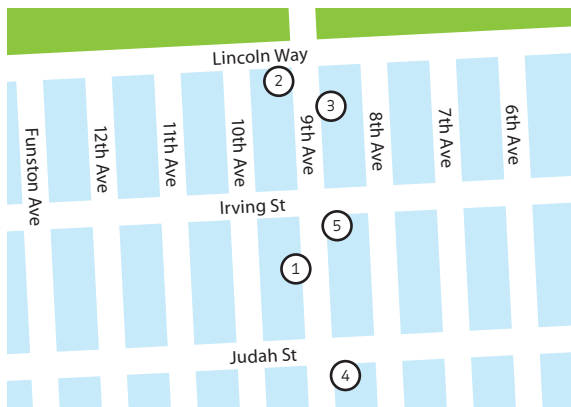
## sidetrips

### INNER RICHMOND

Russian, Korean, Chinese, and Irish influences all converge in the Inner Richmond neighborhood, and you can find them all present at this usually sunny, bustling intersection. The nearby Park Presidio to the north is perfect for nature lovers, and further up Clement Street you'll find an almost-suburban ambiance with well-kept family homes and adorable little gardens. After you've scarfed down some tasty shrimp shu mai at one of the city's most beloved dim sum spots, **Good Luck** (736 Clement, 415-386-3388), get a little — well, a lot — bookish and toddle across the street to Northern California's largest new and used bookstore, **Green Apple Books and Music** (506 Clement, 415-387-2272, [www.greenapplebooks.com](http://www.greenapplebooks.com)), three floors of excellent mental exercise. For a sprightly lift, the aquapainted **Toy Boat** (401 Clement, 415-751-7501) offers tasty ice cream and brims with rare toys and hard-to-find novelty items. Round your afternoon off with a pint of Guinness and some Celtic entertainment and lively talk at perfect pub **The Plough and Stars** (116 Clement, 415-751-1122, [www.theploughandstars.com](http://www.theploughandstars.com)).

**Muni: 38 Geary**

## 9TH AVE & IRVING



### 1. Arizmendi Bakery

This worker-owned co-op, an offshoot of the fabled Cheeseboard Collective in Berkeley and named after a Basque labor organizer, sells incredible, baked-on-site cupcakes, bialys, scones, and other pastries, as well as a stunning array of unique focaccia and pizzas. Perfect to grab and go if you're looking to sun in the park or enjoy at the cozy tables out front.

1331 Ninth Ave. (415) 566-3117, [www.arizmendibakery.com](http://www.arizmendibakery.com)

### 2. Little Shamrock

The Shamrock's been serving pub suds since 1893 and sailed right through Prohibition as if that sad period of history never happened. The well-worn interior is full of odd memorabilia and photographs from the end of the 19th century, and there's a

thirst-provoking sign out front that reads "We've been here 113 years and our prices prove it." As a matter of fact, they do.

807 Lincoln Way, SF. (415) 661-0060

### 3. Misdirections

Whoever doesn't like a little magic will be disappeared. This tiny shop is stocked to the rafters with party novelties — yes, there are a dozen variations on the classic whoopee cushion. But it's easy to conjure away a couple hours gawking at all the fun stuff even if you're not stranded in pre-adolescence. Make sure to get your fortune told by one of the vintage coin-operated machines.

1236 Ninth Ave. (415) 566-2180, [www.misdirections.com](http://www.misdirections.com)

### 4. Great Overland Book Company

This clean, well-lit oasis is all that's left of the neighborhood's once-thriving bookstore hub. It may have survived due to its reasonable prices and impeccable selection of used tomes — especially in the memoir and Western and California history sections. But we think it's the special charm of the cheerful owner, present most days, that really makes the shop a pleasure to get lost in.

345 Judah. (415) 664-0126

### 5. Art's Café

It seats about 12, but this too-cute family-owned diner, which has been serving some of the best greasy spoon breakfasts and lunches in the city for more than 60 years, is well worth the sometimes unbearable wait. The best part: you can order Korean specialties like bi bim bop (mixed vegetables with rice) and the cooks won't bat an eye.

747 Irving. (415) 665-7440, [www.artscafesf.com](http://www.artscafesf.com)

## sidetrips

### UPPER HAIGHT

The epicenter and birthplace of hippie culture still attracts disenfranchised youth with its head shops, Eastern-leaning boutiques, proximity to Golden Gate Park, and teeming street life. But the modern day Haight-Ashbury has grown to accommodate more than just the hemp-and-hackysack subculture, now featuring shops where punks, burners, sex workers, skaters, and other anti-establishment types can get their various accoutrements. A classic example is **Piedmont** (1452 Haight, 415-864-8075, [www.piedmontsf.com](http://www.piedmontsf.com)), whose giant fishnet legs outside only hint at the extent of the feathers, glitter, neon, and lace party wear waiting inside. For a glance at what gentrification and 40 years of thriving tourism (sidewalks are almost non-navigable on weekends) has introduced, check out new upscale hotspot **Alembic** (1725 Haight, 415-666-0822, [www.alembicbar.com](http://www.alembicbar.com)) for top-notch whiskey cocktails and sophisticated cuisine. Or, while the hungry, rowdy masses clamber for tables at the worthy-but-crowded Cha Cha Cha, head instead to local favorite **Citrus Club** (1790 Haight, 415-387-6366), where steaming bowls of noodle soup are still affordable.

**Muni: 6 Parnassus, 7 Haight**



## hotspot: glen park **DIAMOND & BOSWORTH**

This village-like neighbor of Noe Valley may have lost some of its “secret oasis” status in the last 10 years since new commercial ventures like Chenery Park starting moving in. But the upscale, sleepy enclave has lost none of its charm. With winding streets, tiny shops, and a slow, pedestrian pace, visiting Glen Park feels almost like leaving the city altogether. In fact, the biggest building in the area is the new library. How quaint.

**Muni:** J Church  
23 Monterey  
26 Valencia  
44 O’Shaughnessy  
52 Excelsior  
**BART:** Glen Park

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## sidetrips

### BEACHES

Yes, those myths about San Francisco being foggy and cold are mostly true — although things heat up often, and the skies can be clear and the air dry for weeks at a stretch, especially in late spring and early fall. While the waters of the Pacific and the bay are far too cold and often too dangerous to swim in, locals usually find other ways to have fun on the city's beaches. Like by taking off their clothes and engaging in a spirited game of volleyball on picture-perfect **Baker Beach** (25th Ave. and El Camino del Mar, 415-566-0560) on the city's northwest outer reaches. Recent construction has made Baker less secluded and more accessible to families, so you may want to watch where you spike your balls. On the west side of town, **Ocean Beach** (Fulton and Great Highway, 415-561-4323) is a wide expanse of sand that sometimes hosts wild bonfire parties at night that attract Burning Man fans. And there's nothing like the exhilarating sight of hang gliders swooping over the cliffs of **Fort Funston** (Skyline Blvd. and John Muir Dr., 415-561-4323), just to the south of Ocean Beach.

## DIAMOND & BOSWORTH



### 1. Le P'tit Laurent

Named for its owner and former Clementine partner, Laurent Legendre, this relative newcomer gives other San Francisco French restaurants a run for their euros. A pressed-tin ceiling, worn-in look, and delightful view of Glen Park's street life gives the small bistro a decidedly Parisian feel. But it's the cuisine, including creative takes on seafood and the cassoulet with duck-leg confit and Toulouse sausage that elevates Le P'tit beyond a simple neighborhood favorite.

699 Chenery. [www.leptitlaurent.com](http://www.leptitlaurent.com)

### 2. La Corneta

Contrary to popular belief, this is the original location of the Mission District taqueria, and is arguably even better than its sib-

ling on 23rd Street and Mission. Locals line up for ample portions, fresh seafood (including a stellar salmon quesadilla and prawn baby burrito), and some of the best carne asada in the city.

2834 Diamond. (415) 469-8757, [www.lacorneta.com](http://www.lacorneta.com)

### 3. Glen Park Station

For a true neighborhood experience, grab dinner at La Corneta and eat it at this unpretentious dive. Enjoy the back patio when the weather's nice or the fireplace when it's not. Plus, the cheap, strong drinks, bar snacks, dart board, and eclectic jukebox are enjoyable all year round.

2816 Diamond. (415) 333-4633

### 4. Perch

New neighbors aren't always welcome in swiftly changing 'hoods, but no one's complained about the arrival of this quirky, lovely home and gift shop. Owners Zoel Fages and Sue Pulhorn curate the cheerful boutique like a retail-homage to their modern-meets-vintage taste, and their personal touch shows. Particular recent favorites? Jewelry, baby apparel, and whimsical surprises like soaps sculpted to look like miniature hands (get it? hand soap?) and an extra-large glass that holds a whole bottle of wine. But the merch is always changing, so you never know what you'll find.

654 Chenery. (415) 586-9000, [www.perchsf.com](http://www.perchsf.com)

### 5. Tyger's

Glen Park breakfast newbies are often distracted by the obviously cute, log-cabin-inspired Higher Grounds Coffee House. But those in the know cross the street for a hearty, affordable meal at this diner-like café. Like the shop's façade, the food is decent but not fancy. And by "decent," we mean some of the best club sandwiches and pancakes in San Francisco.

2798 Diamond. (415) 239-4060, [www.tygerscoffeeshop.com](http://www.tygerscoffeeshop.com)

## sidetrips

### BERKELEY

Brimming with University of California students, creative types, sunshine, and radical history, Berkeley makes a great afternoon or evening for visitors and SF residents. Dress in something breezy (preferably made of hemp or hand-woven by some highland peoples), hop on BART, and get some art, culture, and great food. Although it's a bit off the beaten path of the UC Berkeley–Telegraph Street nexus, locals love to wipe the ghee off their chins at fab Indian cookery nook **Vik's Chaat Corner** (724 Allston, 510-644-4412, [www.viksdistributors.com](http://www.viksdistributors.com)). You'll find a plethora of street theater in Berkeley, but for famous names and ballet and world music bliss, check out the **Cal Performances series** ([www.calperformances.net](http://www.calperformances.net)), whose season stretches throughout most of the year and takes place primarily in the gorgeous Zellerbach Hall on the UC Berkeley campus. And when you're done browsing incense shops, head to **Musical Offering** (2430 Bancroft Way, Berk. 510-849-0211, [www.musicaloffering.com](http://www.musicaloffering.com)), a small, independent record store with an interesting selection of medieval music, plus a café serving fresh salads and Peruvian corn bread.

**BART: Richmond**

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**UNDERGROUND SF**

"folsom street"

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**GREEN SF**

"Academy of Sciences"

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**ICONIC SF**

"ObamaGeist"

*Submitted by  
Tim Daw*

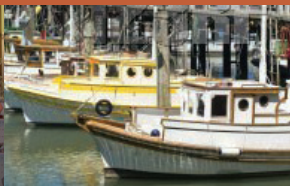
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